

Message Text

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ACTION ABF-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6333

SECDEF WASHDC

OSAF WASHDC

CSAF WASHDC

OASD/ISA/DSAA

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

ASD WPAFB OHIO

AFSC ANDREWS AFB MD

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E.O. 11652: NA/

TAGS: MILI, MASS, AGAO, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN MOD COMMENTS ON GAO REPORT ON F-16

REF: BRUSSELS 7932 (NOTAL)

1. THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE PUBLISHED FOLLOWING PRESS
RELEASE APRIL 28 (UNOFFICIAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION):

"THE GAO PUBLISHED A REPORT TO THE AMERICAN CONGRESS
ON MONDAY APRIL 24, 1978 ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE F-16 PROGRAM
FOR THE USAF.

"THIS REPORT PRESENTS IN ABOUT 50 PAGES A VERY COMPLETE,
IMPARTIAL AND DISPASSIONATE OUTLINE OF THE AMERICAN F-16 PROGRAM.
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IT IS, NEVERTHELESS, USEFUL TO NOTE THAT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THE
SUBJECTS RAISED ALSO CONCERN THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPATION IN THE
PROGRAM.

"IN THIS REGARD, THE MOD BELIEVES IT USEFUL TO SET FORTH
ITS VIEWS ON SOME OF THE SUBJECTS RAISED IN THE REPORT, EITHER
BECAUSE THEIR APPLICABILITY TO THE EUROPEAN ASPECT IS NOT REALISTIC

OR BECAUSE THE SPECIAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT REQUIRES THAT THEY BE CLARIFIED IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT.

"NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT.

"THE AGREEMENT SIGNED IN JUNE 1975 BETWEEN THE FOUR EUROPEAN

GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING BELGIUM, AND THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT STIPULATES THAT THE PROGRAM IS BASED ON 1000 AIRCRAFT: 650 FOR THE UNITED STATES AND 350 FOR THE FOUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS. THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT INTEND TO ABANDON THIS OBLIGATION AND ITS ACQUISITION OF 650 AIRCRAFT IS NOT AT ISSUE.

"ON THE CONTRARY, THE U.S. HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO ACQUIRE A CONSIDERABLY LARGER NUMBER OF F-16S. THIS INTENTION IS CONTESTED BY THE GAO WHICH SUGGESTS TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT THAT IT REEXAMINE ITS NEEDS BEFORE ORDERING A LARGER NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT. THIS IS LOGICAL, WHEN ONE REALIZES THAT THIS PROGRAM EXTENDS WELL INTO THE 1980S. ON THE OTHER HAND, THIS INTERVENTION HAS NO BEARING AT ALL ON THE OPERATIONAL, FINANCIAL OR ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN PROGRAM.

"UNIT COST.

"THE REPORT NOTES A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE UNIT COST
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OF THE F-16. THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE COST OF THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT. THE UNIT COST OF THE EUROPEAN-PRODUCED F-16 TO THE PROFIT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IS ITSELF PROTECTED BY THE AGREEMENT BY A NOT TO EXCEED PRICE. A CONTRACTUAL TRANCHE IS INCLUDED IN THIS PRICE COVERING THE DEVELOPMENT COSTS WHICH DOES NOT CHANGE REGARDLESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT COSTS TO THE U.S. THIS EXPLAINS THE GAO COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT.

"MOTORIZATION.

"THE COMPANY UNITED TECHNOLOGY IS BUILDING THE F-100 ENGINE WHICH IS USED IN THE TWIN ENGINE F-15 AND THE SINGLE ENGINE F-16. AS A RESULT OF CERTAIN ENGINE PROBLEMS WHICH OCCURRED WITH THE F-15 DURING ITS FIRST 77,000 HOURS OF OPERATION, THE ENGINE MANUFACTURER HAS DERIVED A POTENTIAL LOSS RATE FOR THE F-16. THE BASIS FOR THESE PROBLEMS ON THE F-15 IS A PHENOMENON CALLED 'STAGNATION' CAUSED BY THE CONFIGURATION ITSELF OF THIS HIGH PERFORMANCE ENGINE AND WHICH IS MOST FREQUENTLY THE RESULT OF USING THE AFTER BURNER AT HIGH ALTITUDE AND LOW SPEED. WE SHOULD NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT A PARTICULARLY COMMON SITUATION. AS A CORRECTIVE TO THIS CONDITION NOTED ON THE F-15, TECHNICAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE ENGINE HAVE BEEN MADE IN ORDER CONSIDERABLY TO

REDUCE THE STALL RATE. THE MODIFICATIONS WILL BE INTRODUCED DURING PRODUCTION OF THE FABRIQUE NATIONALE-PRODUCED ENGINES FOR THE EUROPEAN F-16S. WE SHOULD NOTE THAT THE GAO CRITICIZES THE HIGH POTENTIAL LOSS RATE IN COMPARISON TO THE PROJECTIONS OF THE SPECIFICATION GOAL, WHILE ADMITTING IN THE SAME REPORT THAT THIS RATE IS IN LINE WITH THE ACTUAL LOSS RATE EXPERIENCED BY OTHER SINGLE ENGINE AIRCRAFT. LET US ALSO RECALL IN CONCLUSION THAT THE GOAL IS TO BRING THE LOSS RATE DUE TO ENGINE PROBLEMS DOWN TO ONE AIRCRAFT

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PER 100,000 FLIGHT HOURS. NOTHING PERMITS THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS GOAL CANNOT BE ATTAINED WHEN THE ANTICIPATED ENGINE MODIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE.

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IN CONCLUSION THAT THIS GAO REPORT DOES NOT SIGNIFY ANYTHING SPECIAL IN AND BY ITSELF. IN FACT, THE GAO FOLLOWS ALL AMERICAN PROGRAMS AND IMPORTANT LONGTERM PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE F-16. THESE REPORTS ARE USEFUL BECAUSE THEY REQUIRE THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES, SHOULD THE NEED EXIST, TO FOLLOW CLOSELY PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE AND TO TAKE THE NECESSARY CORRECTIVE ACTION AS NECESSARY. THE LATTER IS OFTEN ALREADY UNDERWAY BEFORE THE

PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT.

"IN ORDER TO REPLY TO CERTAIN WORRIES WHICH OCCASIONALLY
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APPEAR IN UNINFORMED CIRCLES AS TO THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE
F-16 PROGRAM, IT SUFFICES TO RECALL THE OVERALL SATISFACTION
EXPRESSED BY BELGIAN AEROSPACE CIRCLES WHICH WILL PROFIT
FROM CONTRACTS TO DATE AMOUNTING TO MORE THAN 750 MILLION DOLLARS.
TAKING EXPORT CONTRACTS INTO ACCOUNT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE
PROSPECT OF REACHING 100 COMPENSATION IS ENTIRELY REALISTIC."
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